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 855

me in her mother's room'. The other categories are blurred; any adult 593
of the domestic group is described as a 'mother' or 'father'.

During these first three or four years a child's father, though he sees 855
less of it than its mother does, is as loving and indulgent a parent. A
baby can do no wrong; for, as Tallensi say, 'it has no sense (*u ka yam*)'. 593
I have seen an infant screaming in a tantrum or nagging tiresomely at its 751
mother while she was too busy with a household task, such as cooking,
to attend to it, and its father come in and carry it off to soothe it. What
discipline or frustration of impulse a child encounters in this period
comes mainly from its mother or a young nursemaid. For example until
it can drink by itself, an infant is regularly given a drink (*yuh*, causative [515]
from *yu*, to drink), at least once daily, usually when it is bathed. This is
an item of hygiene with a quasi-magical stamp. The fluid may be plain
water, unboiled or previously boiled and cooled down; or it may be a
decoction of roots (*yaya*), the generic term for any vegetable products
used in Tale leechcraft and medicine. Its composition is prescribed by
the child's spirit guardian (*sɛyɔr*). After its bath the mother lays the
child on her lap facing sideways, holds her cupped hand to its mouth,
and pours the drink from a small calabash into the babe's mouth. It
splutters and chokes, kicks and screams with rage, but the liquid is
poured down its throat relentlessly.

Until they can run about by themselves Tale children are not expected 514
to be house-clean. By the age of 3, however, most of them have learnt
to run outside to defecate during the day and to ask to be taken outside 863
in the night. They are still apt to micturate indoors wherever they may
happen to be. Tallensi do not inculcate clean habits by direct training
or by punishing faults in a child. A child acquires cleanliness by a
gradual process of habituation[1] and social maturation as its general self-
control, its powers of locomotion and of speech, and its identifications
with adults grow. But if a small child, already accustomed to run out-
side, has an accident indoors, it is likely to be rebuked by one of the
adults, most probably its mother or an older sibling.

It is also the mother who stands for the most serious deprivation the 593
child experiences up to the age of weaning, the loss of the breast. There 789
is nothing in their folk-lore or customs suggesting that the Tallensi have
anything but the most matter-of-fact attitude towards the female breast. 826
I have seen a man, with that utter lack of squeamishness characteristic
of most Tallensi, when treating his brother's wife for inability to
nurse her baby, himself suck at her breast in order to test the flow of
milk. But there is a custom which hints that the mother's breast is felt
to be a special symbol of motherhood. If a woman is very grievously
affronted by her grown-up son or daughter, and she takes hold of her
breast and says, 'I suffered to bear you and this is how you treat me

[1] Described in my *Social and Psychological Aspects of Education in Taleland* as a response to the expectation of normal behaviour.

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593 (*Man daa nye fara dɔŋi ki cŋɔm la ŋwala*)', this is a curse of the most
789 terrible kind. For that reason, no doubt, none of my informants could quote an instance of a mother actually putting this curse on a child.
●826 The symbolism is of interest, however, in view of the stress Tallensi lay on the mother as food-giver in their conventional picture of her.

Childhood

857 The next three or four years of a child's life are probably its freest and
593 happiest. Its energies are spent in play or in roaming around the immediate neighbourhood of the homestead in the company of slightly older siblings and classificatory siblings. But children of this age delight in being with their parents too. They will hang around their mother in the kitchen and trot around or sit with their father when he is resting under the shade tree. They see and hear everything that is going on in the house and are tolerated at all domestic occasions. In this way, and through their mimetic play, they build up the rudimentary schemas[1] of ideas, manual dexterities, and sentiments out of which grow the skills, interests, and values of later life. Love and indulgence is still the keynote of their parents' and other close relatives' attitude to them. Tallensi say that small children at this stage are still more attached to their mother than to their father because it is she who feeds them. In fact, as we have already mentioned, throughout a Talɔŋ's life he thinks of his mother as the one who gave him food without stint, going hungry herself, if need be, so that her child might be fed.

By the age of 7 or 8 the child's world is becoming much more complex;
857 and the shadow of discipline and authority is creeping over it. Until it
868 reaches the threshold of adolescence, at about 12 to 14 years of age, it still remains free to play for much of its time. But from the age of 7 or
593 so boys and girls are eager to participate in the adult routine of life and they become more and more involved in it. They begin by being given the simplest economic and household tasks such as scaring the birds from the fields of ripening grain, tethering the goats, rounding up the poultry—tasks which children of both sexes perform—or sweeping the house, carrying a tiny pot of water, gathering edible fungi or herbs for the pot, which girls only do. A very common task of both girls and boys at this stage is acting nursemaid to a baby. As this shows, there is very little social differentiation between them as yet.

857 By the age of about 9 or 10 children begin to adopt the sexual division
593 of labour customary among the Tallensi, and with it the corresponding division of social roles and ideals. Boys start following their older
462 brothers and take their turn at herding their father's cattle if he has any.
868 They are becoming more skilful with the hoe and by the age of about 12 reach a high degree of proficiency. A 12-year-old boy helps his mother

[1] Cf. the discussion of this concept in my Memorandum just cited.